

April 2, 2014

The Honorable Douglas Wilkins

Dear Judge Wilkins:

My name is Mary Claire Kennedy, and I served as Mayor of the City of Lawrence from 1994 until 1998. During that time, Mr. Leonard Degnan was one of my most trusted advisors.

When I took office, I did so under a dark cloud of fiscal crisis. Mr. Degnan had served as City Councilor and Interim Mayor before me, and he had begun to tackle the City's fiscal woes. While he would not accept a full-time paid position with my administration, he did agree to work with us on a voluntary basis. With his help and financial acumen, we were able to balance four budgets in four years, erase the deficit, create a rainy day fund for future emergencies, and improve the City's credit rating.

The City remained on stable financial footing for eight years before sliding back into red ink. By the time William Lantigua took office, history had repeated itself, but the problem was much larger. The debt was many millions of dollars more than it was when I became Mayor. Again, for a second time, a Mayor turned to Leonard Degnan for help. Having had the experience of working for me without compensation, this time Mr. Degnan decided he should take a paying position in the Mayor's office.

Again, as a result of Mr. Degnan's long hours and hard work, budgets got balanced, bills got paid and the rainy day fund was replenished.

In the two decades that I have known and worked with Leonard Degnan, I have never met a more honest, hard-working, dedicated public servant. We got along well and worked well together because we share certain traits that elected officials and their staff must share. Either you're honest, or you're not. Either you're committed to the public good, or you're not. In my experience, Leonard Degnan has always been both honest and committed to the public good of the citizens of Lawrence. He is a true public servant in every sense of the word, worthy of the public's trust, and has never done anything to suggest otherwise.

Yes, Leonard Degnan might have some rough edges around his demeanor. He can be blunt and "in-your-face" when dealing with issues he feels passionately about such as absentee landlords who don't keep up their properties or who don't pay water and property tax bills; vendors who don't live up to their contracts; people who don't do the jobs they're paid to do. Mr. Degnan will most likely never win a "Mr. Congeniality" award, but having a rough demeanor is not a crime.

Never once have I ever known Mr. Degnan to be anyone other than a good family man, a constant contributor to his community and a decent human being. He has coached youth sports and continues to play a critical role in the education, development and guidance of his son, Leonard Jr. Lenny needs the constant presence of his father in his life. He has two more years of high school to complete, and the task is daunting. His father has devoted the last 15 years of his life to his son and the next two years are critical in terms of what Lenny's future will be.

Just one more thing. You perhaps don't know that Mayors and private companies they do business with agree to donate old trash trucks, fire trucks, ambulances, etc. to poor cities in the Caribbean all the time.